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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM ABC World News Tonight

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PETER JENNINGS: As for Colonel Qaddafi, you may recall that one of the ways the Administration said it connected Libya to the bombing of the Berlin discotheque was by listening to messages which were being sent from Libya to the Libyan People's Bureau in East Berlin. Now, as ABC's Barry Serafin reports, the CIA Director, William Casey, threatens to prosecute those news organizations which subsequently published the details of the intercepted communications.

BARRY SERAFIN: William Casey was among those on hand for President Reagan's return from Tokyo today. But the CIA Director had already made news of his own. Today's Washington Post disclosed that Casey had warned the newspaper the Administration is considering criminal prosecutions against The Post and four other publications for reporting information on U.S. intelligence gathering, particularly intercepted communications.

Casey's complaints apparently centered mainly on reports of messages between Libya and its embassy in East Berlin around the time of the bombing of a Berlin discotheque.

President Reagan, himself, furnished considerable detail about those messages to justify the U.S. bombing of Libya.

PRESIDENT REAGAN: On April 4th, the People's Bureau alerted Tripoli that the attack would be carried out the following morning. The next day, they reported back to Tripoli on the great success of their mission.

SERAFIN: Casey this week insisted information had been leaked before the President spoke.

DIRECTOR CASEY: There's always a question of whether the justification justifies jeopardizing your intelligence sources for the future. In this case, it was rather an easy question because the media had already made the disclosure.

SERAFIN: Some of those earlier reports, however, were based on public statements by U.S. officials, such as Ambassador to West Germany Richard Burt. And a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee says the Administration is after the wrong people.

SEN. PATRICK LEAHY: I think if you decide to go out and prosecute members of the press, that you're treating the symptom rather than the problem. I've always maintained what you do is find out the person leaking.

SERAFIN: A Washington Post editor who met with Casey says the CIA Director is serious about prosecuting the press. But sources say Casey's enthusiasm is not shared by Attorney General Edwin Meese. Meese, in fact, is said to view the idea as total nonsense.